

## **EXECUTIVE BRIEFING INTRODUCTION**

**“Executive Briefing” summarises the business transacted by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s Board at its meeting on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007 at 9.30am in the Boardroom, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8PB.**

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**Members Present:**

- Mr Brian Rowntree**
- Mrs Anne Henderson**
- Mr Ciaran Brolly**
- Mr Brendan Curran**
- Mr Alistair Joynes**
- Mr Brendan Mackin**
- Mr Robert McKee**
- Mr Jim Speers**
- Dr Monica Wilson**

**Apologies: Mr Eamonn O’Neill**

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## **1.0 BUSINESS PLAN MONITOR**

The Board considered the Business Plan Monitor for January 2007.

1.1 The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provide measures of progress against the eight objectives defined in the 2006/07 Business Plan. The KPIs are reported on either monthly, quarterly, half yearly or annually, and any significant variations from targeted performance are highlighted.

1.2 The Board were pleased to note that performance for January has been generally good, with the majority of targets either fully or substantially met.

## **2.0 THIRD QUARTER REPORTING OF NIHE EFFICIENCY SAVINGS 2005-2008 TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

The Board noted the projected NIHE efficiency savings for 2006/07 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter efficiencies reported to the Department for Social Development.

2.1 The Housing Executive is committed to achieving cumulative efficiency gains of 2.5% per year over the 3 years from 2005/06 to 2007/08. The savings will be achieved through a combination of:

- a reduction in unit costs on the Capital, Revenue and Grants programmes;
- a reduction in staff numbers;
- administrative savings related to Housing Benefit.

2.2 The progress report, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2006, has been submitted to the Department for Social Development. The Board will be briefed on progress against the 2006/07 efficiency targets during May 2007.

### **3.0 SOCIAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY & FUNDING**

The Board noted the present position with regard to governance, accountability and funding on the Social Housing Development Programme.

- 3.1 The Social Housing Development Programme for Northern Ireland is currently being administered by the Department for Social Development. With effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 operational responsibilities will be transferred to the Housing Executive and the necessary legislative powers have been passed to enact the transfer.
- 3.2 A new control document is currently being drawn up that will be added to the existing Management Statement and Financial Memorandum. This control document, which is currently under discussion, will bring clarity to the roles of the DSD and the Housing Executive in the management of the Social Housing programme.
- 3.3 There are a number of budgetary implications for the 2007/08 programme dependent on the level of funding already committed and the on-site dates for schemes.

### **4.0 TOWN CENTRE LIVING INITIATIVE AREAS**

The Board approved a number of Town Centre Living Initiative Area (TCLIA) boundary amendments and proposals for inviting further submissions for TCLIAs from Councils.

- 4.1 In October 2006 the Board approved the declaration of a further 5 TCLIAs with effect from January 2007, bringing the total Areas declared to 11. The 11 Areas are: Lisburn; Derry/Londonderry; Cookstown; Dromore (Co Down); Dungannon; Lurgan; Ballymoney; Donaghadee; Downpatrick; Enniskillen and Strabane.

When Councils make submissions for TCLIAs exact boundaries are put forward which are used for the formal declaration of the area. The Housing Executive revised boundary proposals from 4 Councils – Donaghadee, Dromore, Dungannon and Strabane.

- 4.2 Initial indications show that interest in those towns declared as TCLIAs from January 2007 has been reasonably high. There has also been considerable progress in the TCLIAs declared effective from January 2006.

The Chief Executive will be writing to all District Councils inviting submissions for TCLIA status by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007. Following assessment it is intended that recommendations will be made to the Board for a further 5 new TCLIAs with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008.

## **5.0 SUPPORTING PEOPLE BUDGET 2007/08**

The Supporting People programme has now been in operation for almost 4 years with approximately 130 providers delivering services in over 1,000 schemes, both accommodation-based and floating support. These services enable some of Northern Ireland's most vulnerable people to live independently.

- 5.1 The Board approved the financial aspects of the Supporting People programme. Subject to confirmation from the Department for Social Development, the Supporting People budget for 2007/08 will be £60.97m.

- 5.2 The £60.97m budget for 2007/08 makes provision for:

- 1) the continuation of funding under existing contracts;
- 2) the provision of an inflationary increase of 3% on existing Supporting People contracts;
- 3) the funding of new supported accommodation projects, included in the social housing development programme opening in 2007/08, with consequential SP funding requirements;
- 4) the funding of new floating support services prioritised for development by the 4 Area Supporting People Partnerships and the Commissioning Body;
- 5) the administration costs of the Supporting People programme;
- 6) the continuation of the capacity building work with the private sector which began in 2005/06.

## **6.0 POLICY STATEMENT ON CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLES' ISSUES**

The Board approved the Housing Executive's draft Children and Young People's Policy.

6.1 In August 2006 the Board approved the development of a policy statement for children and young people following the publication of the Government's Children's Strategy. The Housing Executive's Equality Scheme commits the organisation to the promotion of equality of opportunity between people of different ages. This Policy Statement is integral therefore to the Equality Scheme and is fundamental in addressing the issues of children and young people, and will represent the Housing Executive's contribution to the Government's Children's Strategy.

6.2 There is current legislation dealing with various issues surrounding children and young people. These issues include employment and anti-poverty commitments. The proposed Single Equality Bill, which was part of the St Andrew's Agreement, will harmonise and strengthen anti-discrimination powers and may be extended.

6.3 The key strands of the Housing Executive's Policy Statement are:

- 1) provision
- 2) protection
- 3) participation

6.4 In addition to specific commitments against each of the above key strands, the Policy Statement recommends 4 key actions which would mainstream children and young people's issues into the Housing Executive's business planning and strategies. These are:

- 1) The identification of a high level champion for children and young people in the Housing Executive;
- 2) The identification of a specific point of contact for children and young people's issues in the Housing Executive;
- 3) Specific pro-active outreach work to fully engage with key representative groups;

4) The development of children and young people-proofing mechanisms to complement Section 75.

6.5 Following the consultation process, the final Children and Young People's Policy and Action Plan will be presented to the Board for approval around July 2007.

**7.0 2007/08 DISTRICT HOUSING PLAN – DOWN DISTRICT SAMPLE PLAN**

The Board noted the report on the 2006/07 District Housing Plans.

7.1 The Housing Executive annually produces District Housing Plans for all 26 District Councils. The plans are produced to inform and consult District Councils about housing in their areas and how housing need is being addressed. The

Plans also provide Councillors with an opportunity to highlight and discuss the range of trends, issues, policies and initiatives affecting the wider local housing environment.

7.2 The Board noted the format of the 2006/07 Plan, details of its distribution in hard copy and computer disc, and noted the number of hits/visits to the web site.

The format of the 2007/08 has been amended in response to feedback.

7.3 The Plans will be circulated to the various District Councils during June and tabled for presentation and discussion.

The format of the Plans for 2008/09 will be amended in line with the template for the Welsh Assembly.

The Board approved the preparation and release of all 26 District Housing Plans based on the format of the Down District Sample Plan for 2007/08.

**8.0 DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION (NI) ORDER (DDO) – DRAFT DISABILITY ACTION PLAN**

The Board noted the draft Disability Action Plan and approved the commencement of consultation prior to final

approval by the Board and submission to the Equality Commission.

8.1 In November 2006 the Board approved the Housing Executive's response to the draft Guidelines on the new statutory duties of the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order (DDO) 2006. As a requirement of the DDO, the Housing Executive's Equality Unit prepared a draft Disability Action Plan to show how the organisation proposes to fulfil its statutory duties in relation to the organisation's functions.

8.2 In addition to a statement of commitment jointly signed off by the Chairman and Chief Executive the draft Disability Action Plan contains specific statements on:

- 1) Resources to manage the Plan
- 2) Engagement and consultation with people with disabilities
- 3) Training
- 4) Producing an Annual Report
- 5) Timetable and action measures

8.3 The most important aspect of the Plan will be the actions identified to meet the requirements of the new duties. These include:

- a) Developing policy screening processes;
- b) Screening policies which impact most on people with disabilities;
- c) Presenting positive images;
- d) Research into attitudes and measuring change;
- e) Reviewing all communication policies;
- f) Training for Board, staff and Housing Community Network (HCN);
- g) Presenting positive benefits of supported and other specifically designed housing in District Plans;
- h) Developing communication plans to promote the positive benefits of specific "sensitive" supported housing schemes;
- i) Making space for people with disabilities on the Housing Community Network, Inter Community Network (ICN), Consultative Forum on Equality and the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum;
- j) Compiling a database of local organisations which represent people with disabilities;

- k) Providing suitable training and support for people with disabilities in “public life” positions;
- l) Working with “third party” organisations to encourage the adoption of the principles of the 2 statutory duties;
- m) Promoting employment opportunity practices.

8.4 A seminar has been arranged by the Housing Executive on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2007 which will facilitate a “one-stop-shop” consultation exercise across a range of organisations in the disability, age and carers fields.

Following a formal consultation exercise, which will commence after the Assembly elections, a final Disability Action Plan will be presented to the Board for approval in June 2007.

#### **9.0 TRANSFER OF ORLITS, DUNGANNON TO A HOUSING ASSOCIATION**

The Board approved the transfer of 2 Ornit properties at Pomeroy Road and Derrylee Road in Dungannon to a nominated Housing Association, subject to DSD approval.

#### **10.0 FUNDING OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ENERGY AGENCY & NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION (NI)**

The Board approved funding of £135,000 for the Northern Ireland Energy Agency and the National Energy Action Northern Ireland for 2007/08.

10.1 As Home Energy Conservation Authority for Northern Ireland, the Housing Executive has a responsibility to try to improve the energy efficiency of the domestic sector. Part of the Strategy to achieve the target is the provision of training, advice and information to the general public. Part of this strategy is to fund a number of voluntary bodies to provide advice and information to householders on behalf of the Housing Executive.

#### **10.2 The Northern Ireland Energy Agency**

The 3 Energy Efficiency Advice Centres (EEACs) in Northern Ireland, in Belfast, Enniskillen and Londonderry, have amalgamated to form the Northern Ireland Energy Agency. The Energy Agency provides:

- A direct advice service to the public within their respective areas on behalf of the Energy Saving Trust and the Housing Executive;
- Staff for stands at energy conservation exhibitions;
- Development or management of local energy projects either in partnership with or on behalf of the Housing Executive.

The Northern Ireland Energy Agency maintains a presence in the original three locations of the EEACs ensuring province wide coverage.

### 10.3 National Energy Action Northern Ireland (NEA NI)

The NEA NI has promoted energy efficiency strategies to alleviate fuel poverty in Great Britain since 1992, and set up its Northern Ireland office in 1994. It has been active in lobbying government departments, agencies and ministers to introduce policies to tackle fuel poverty through energy efficiency programmes, increased benefit levels for low income families and price reductions on certain fuels. NEA (NI) is a member of the Housing Executive's HECA Advisory Panel.

## 11.0 REVENUE BUDGET – DISTURBANCE PAYMENTS

- 11.1 Disturbance payments compensate residents for loss or expenditure arising as a natural and reasonable consequence of being physically “disturbed” from their homes. This is a statutory payment arising out of the 1973 “Land Acquisition and Compensation (NI) Order”. To qualify for a disturbance payment a claimant must be permanently displaced.

The Board approved retaining the current minimum disturbance payment levels for the 2007/08 period. These range from £277 to £2,650, depending on the claimant's tenure. The current levels provide a measured response in retaining the aims and objectives of the disturbance scheme while providing appropriate budgetary restraint.

## 12.0 REVENUE BUDGET – REDECORATION ALLOWANCES

The Board noted the outcome of a review of Redecoration Allowances and approved the holding of redecoration

allowances at the present payment levels and the capping of the maximum payment of £700.

- 12.1 Redecoration allowances are usually paid following the completion of planned works which have resulted in the disruption of the décor of a property. The amount payable is based on the number and type of rooms affected.

There are currently 2 rates of allowance:

- 1) High Rate – paid to those who are elderly; have a disability; in receipt of a means tested benefit, no one aged 18-59 living with them or do not have access to community based schemes.
- 2) Standard Rate – this is paid to all other tenants.

The maximum payment is capped and is currently £700. Allowances are usually subject to an annual inflationary increase based upon the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflator.

### **13.0 PHAB INDEPENDENT LIVING**

In November 2006 the Board were advised of the circumstances surrounding the decision of PHAB Independent Living to cease trading on 31<sup>st</sup> October and subsequent “in administration” status on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

- 13.1 The Board commended all those involved in the emergency cover arrangements across all PHAB IL services since October 2006, and the contingency arrangements put in place to secure the future provision of housing support services for all ex-PHAB IL schemes.

Particular reference was made to the emergency service providers and local and Area Housing Executive staff.

### **14.0 TRANSFER OF LAND AT RATHENRAW**

The Board approved the transfer of a Housing Executive site in the Rathenraw Estate, Antrim to the Farranshane Community Trust, subject to DSD approval.

## 15.0 SCHEME DESIGN APPROVALS

SCHEME	WORK CONTENT	START DATE
<b><u>Belfast Area</u></b> Victoria Parade, Belfast	Environmental Works	June 2007
<b><u>North East Area</u></b> Greenisland Phase 9, Carrickfergus	MEI to 23 dwellings and ECM to 5 dwellings	April 2008
<b><u>South East Area</u></b> 52 & 54 Balloo Walk, Bangor	MEI/Conversion for persons with disabilities	March 2007
36 Inishargy Road & 81 Rubane Road, Kircubbin; 62, 92 & 101 Main Street & 15 Islandview Gardens, Greyabbey	MEI to 6 dwellings	September 2007
Bloomfield Bungalows Phase 2, Bangor	MEI & External Works to 44 bungalows	November 2007
<b><u>Belfast Area</u></b> Rinnalea	Installation of gas heating systems to 75 dwellings	January 2007
<b><u>West Area</u></b> Elaghmore/ Corrib/ Ederowen, Etc	Installation of oil heating systems to 124 dwellings	February 2007
<b><u>South Area</u></b> Annaghmore	Installation of oil heating systems to 78 dwellings	January 2007